

THE FATHER OF PROTECTION.

Some History Connected With the Making of the Mc- Farland Tent.

Who bears the proud title of: "Father of his country?"

Not Columbus—although he is given credit for the discovery of America; not Thomas Jefferson—although his hand and brain framed the Declaration of Independence; but George Washington, because it was through his genius and energy that the hopes of the nation were crystallized into form and a practical method of protecting the liberties of the people was established and maintained.

It is upon the same theory that the title of the "Father of Protection" is due to be bestowed upon William H. McFarland.

True, he was not the originator of the idea of protection; he is not even alone in devising means for the protection of orange trees from killing frosts; but it was, unquestionably, his enthusiasm and confidence in the citrus industry in that section of the Florida peninsula above the frost line, that aroused the growers from the lethargy of despair, and which caused them to again take heart and begin anew the effort to restore their groves; and today, while there are many methods not suggested by him, which are being employed to prevent the killing effects of low temperature, his method of protecting trees is acknowledged by all as practical, and is even endorsed by those who have tried some other means of salvation from frost.

The splendidly equipped factory of the McFarland Fruit Protection company, at Titusville, which is now running at its fullest capacity in order to fill the orders for tents and protecting material, which are crowding upon the company, is a monument to the genius and steadfastness of purpose of the "Father of Protection." Its history, if told in detail, would be a revelation of the unswerving determination of the man and the tremendous difficulties under which he labored to perfect his invention and organize a company for its manufacture. Obstacles, which would have appalled ordinary men, had no terrors for him. He determined that he would furnish protection to the orange growers of Florida, and he is now succeeding in doing so.

THE INVENTOR AT WORK.

Beginning the very night of the freeze of February, 1899, when all looked black to the orange grower, Mr. McFarland worked continuously through the spring and summer to perfect a tent that would protect the trees from the cold, and, at the same time, be so constructed that it could be handled with rapidity, made of durable material and at a cost that would render its general adoption feasible. He labored night and day, seeming to take no rest, and, in fact, his disregard of the natural laws of physical endurance was so frequent that his friends were greatly concerned, for fear he would collapse. Much time and money were spent in experiments that promised much; but on account of some unforeseen defect, had to be discarded. Several times, after making a tent that seemed to be all that was required, Mr. McFarland would exhibit it to an admiring crowd, who thought it could not be excelled. Even while he was receiving the plaudits of his neighbors and friends, his keen eye discovered some fatal error of construction or other defect that would condemn it in his own mind, and he would begin all over again. The time came, however, when he remedied all defects and was able to produce a tent that seemed to answer all requirements; even this he has since greatly improved upon.

When Mr. McFarland made up his mind to invent and perfect a system of protection to citrus trees, he was taking his annual winter vacation at his adopted home in Titusville; his business, that of a circus manager, was one in which he commanded the highest salary. As the time approached for him to go upon the road, although he was without funds and dependent upon his salary for a living, he canceled his contracts and made up his mind to devote his entire time to the restoration of the lost orange industry in the state of Florida. He saw, with prophetic eye, the future prosperity of the state, if practical protection could be secured; and he also saw that the majority of the orange growers, however anxious they might be to protect their groves, would be unable, on account of the loss of their trees and crops by a succession of freezes, to make the necessary outlay for tents; it then occurred to him that a system could be inaugurated with

a sufficient amount of capital to enter into contracts to protect groves for a term of years for a percentage of the crop.

PROTECTION HIS THEME.

Meantime, Mr. McFarland lost no opportunity of advertising the fact that he had a plan for the protection of citrus fruits. Protection was the burden of his song, and although many scoffed at the idea of raising oranges under cover; and others, among whom were his close, personal friends, advised him to give up the idea, as it was visionary, and he was ruining his health; still he clung to it and infected others with his enthusiasm. Many a time his plans for the manufacture of his protecting apparatus seemed about to meet with success; but just as the climax was reached, some unforeseen obstacle would dash his hopes and indefinitely postpone the realization of his dreams. Meantime, he was going further and further into debt, while endeavoring to start his factory and to organize a company.

Mr. McFarland's ideas attracted the attention of Mr. Henry M. Flagler, who immediately saw the immense effect which a practical method of protection would have on the fortunes of the people

of the company, was to give security by signing a mortgage.

PROCURED A PLANT ON HIS "NERVE."

The absurdity of the proposition to saddle upon an infant industry an interest charge practically amounting to thirty-seven-and-one-half per cent. was too apparent, and Mr. McFarland sadly, but firmly, refused to entertain such a proposition. It was not the first rebuff he had received and there were others to come; but he did not despair; he determined to go ahead, anyway. He entered into correspondence with all the sewing machine companies in the country with a view to securing machines on the instalment plan. He was promptly told that sewing machines for manufacturing purposes were not sold in that way; nevertheless, he kept at the machine companies, frankly telling, however, that he had no money, and the formation of the company which he hoped to form was still in the uncertain future.

Finally, the managers of the Standard Sewing Machine company wrote him that his persistence was to them good proof of his sincerity and if he could give them references of his good standing and reputation among the business men of

workmen, with a poorly equipped plant, and everything about the business new, and but little understood by either employer or employee, resulted in the usual amount of mistakes, spoiled work and uneconomical methods, so that the progress made was slow. Mr. McFarland's ideas were also too far in advance for his partners to whom he had surrendered a large share of the company stock, to secure that unanimity necessary for success. The consequence was that it was determined, on their part, to get control of the business by offering to buy out the inventor.

MAKING A SHIFT.

Things were assuming a desperate shape for Mr. McFarland; but no one, to see or talk to him, would have suspected it. He was considered at the end of his rope, when, in circus parlance, he made one of those wonderful "shifts," which got him out of present difficulties.

The date was set for a meeting at which a proposition was to be made for Mr. McFarland to sell out, or buy out his partners. The latter proposition was considered out of the question, as he had sunk his last dollar in the enterprise and was hopelessly involved, besides.

But there was a way out.

him a certain sum for his interest, or they would sell out to him on the same terms.

Well, the result of it was: The meeting was held and the offer to sell out to Mr. McFarland, was, to the great surprise of his partners, promptly accepted, and in less time than it takes to tell, the two circus men were in the places of the others, as directors and stockholders of the company. This was on December 8, 1899.

On that day, the first consignment of the McFarland tent manufactured under a patent by the McFarland Fruit Protection company, was made to Mrs. F. A. W. Shimer, of DeLand.

THE FACTORY AS IT IS TODAY.

Since the first tent was shipped to a purchaser, the reputation and demand for the McFarland tent has continued to increase.

Mr. Flagler, on whose property a large number of trees were saved from frost, loaned thousands of dollars to needy and worthy growers, in order that they might protect their groves.

While the percentage plan has been postponed, owing to the lack of sufficient capital to go into it, cash orders have constantly increased. The factory of the McFarland company is now one of the biggest things in the state of Florida, in the way of manufacturing enterprises; it not only occupies the original depot of the old Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West railway, but it has also occupied the passenger offices, built an immense addition for a wood-working department, increased its horse-power, added a complete sawmill and wood-working plant, and built and installed in the building the largest laundry plant in the state; the number of double-stitching machines has been increased, and the capacity for turning out tents has been doubled within two months; and yet the orders ahead are increasing, instead of being caught up with.

Within the past few weeks the factory has been thoroughly inspected and the business of the company carefully scrutinized by a number of capitalists from the north. The feasibility of undertaking to protect on a large scale the orange and grapefruit groves of Florida for a term of years has been carefully considered. The present capacity of the factory, while very large, will not permit of any considerable amount of protection on the percentage basis being attempted this year. There are too many cash orders ahead and others coming in to make it advisable to do anything in this line before another year.

But it will be done, and as there is just the same liability of a killing freeze this year as any year, all those who can provide any kind of protection, whether by banking, fire, boards or temporary expedients, are earnestly urged to protect their groves.

The McFarland company has sent out the following letter, signed by the president of the company:

"I have just returned from a four weeks' trip north, the object of the trip being to try and secure capital sufficient to protect groves on the percentage plan. Before I left for the north I communicated with a number of growers on the subject and encouraged them to a certain extent to expect protection this coming winter upon the percentage plan. I believe that you are one among the number so encouraged. I therefore hasten to enlighten you as to the results of my negotiations north, i. e., I am quite certain that I have succeeded in interesting capital to the extent of securing sufficient money to carry out my original idea of furnishing tents to the grower who could not afford to pay cash for them, the plan being for our company to receive a percentage of his crop for a certain number of years.

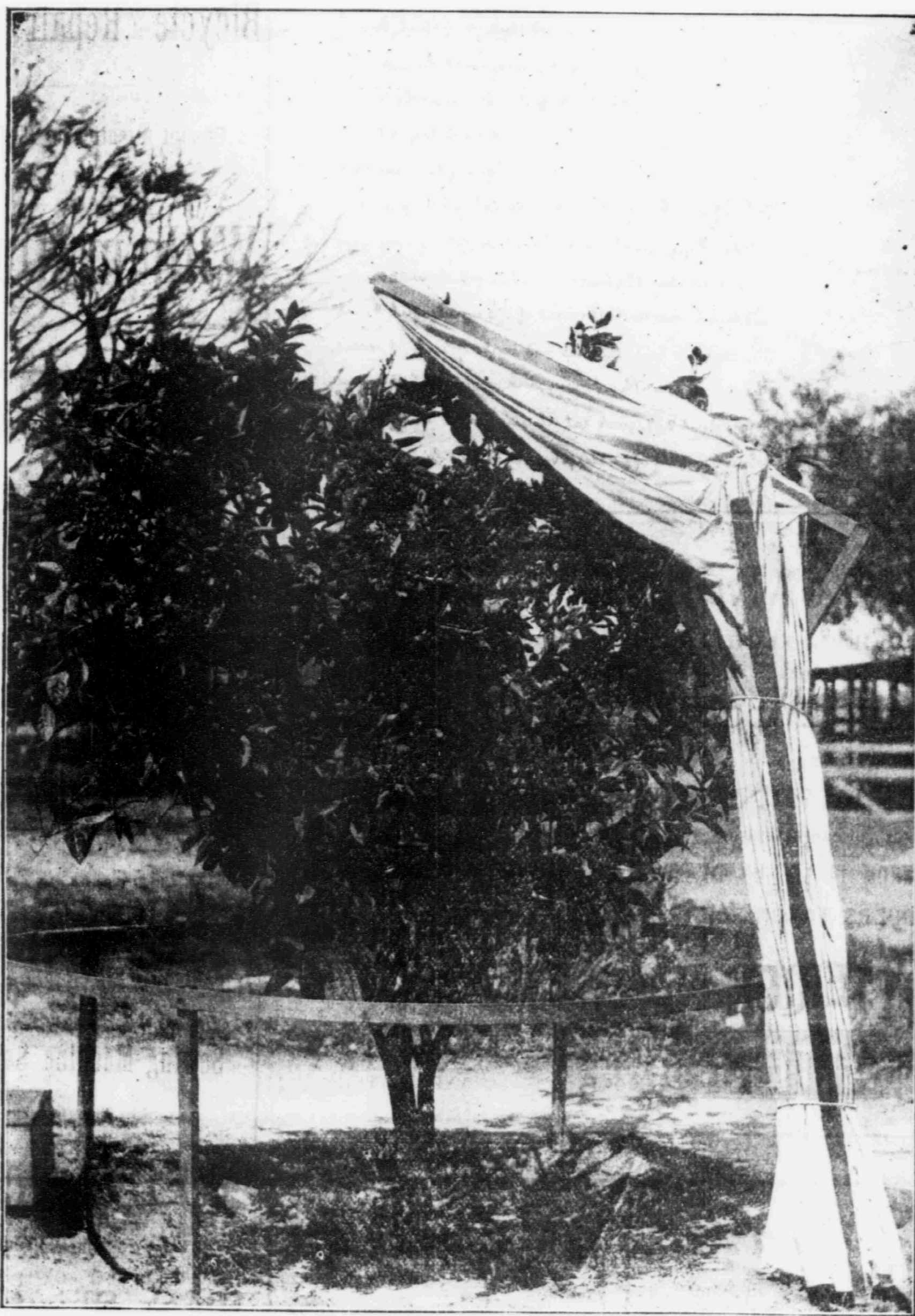
"As I said before, I believe that I have secured capital to furnish such protection but before this capital is absolutely assured it will necessitate a visit to the factory and an investigation as to the correctness of the statements I have set forth by the parties who are to furnish the money to carry out my plan.

"This, at the least, will take three weeks and the season now being so far advanced, it would be impossible for me, even with unlimited capital at my disposal, to increase my facilities for turning out tents in time to furnish tents other than those we already have orders for. Therefore I feel it my duty to make the above statement to all those whom I have encouraged to expect protection on the percentage plan this winter. Although I believe the McFarland tents to be the only practicable method of protection on the market, at the same time, I believe that all kinds of protection are, to a certain extent, good. Therefore I would advise banking, firing, sheds, boxes, ventering, home-made tents, in fact any protection that one's pocket-book will allow him to secure. A great many are using square boxes, also square frames covered with canvas. If you contemplate using anything in this line, I would be pleased to suggest practicable ideas for constructing the same. I have several methods that are far superior to any that have thus far been tried in that line. I offer these suggestions to you in the cause of protection. I do not expect, in fact I would not accept, any remuneration for any suggestions I may offer, but would deem it a pleasure to answer any questions you may ask upon the subject.

"I will close by saying I am satisfied that you may feel safe in expecting our company to furnish a large number of tents next season upon the percentage plan.

"Yours truly,

"W. H. McFARLAND,
President, McFarland Fruit Protection Company."



SCENE IN TURNER'S GROVE, DELAND, FLORIDA.

of Florida, and especially along the east coast, where his interests mostly lay. He was disposed to aid Mr. McFarland in his undertaking, and did so to a certain extent. The slight aid given him at the time, which enabled the inventor to take the first steps toward erecting a plant, was supplemented by an offer to put in a certain sum of money in a company; provided, the citizens of Titusville took stock to an amount one-third of that proposed by Mr. Flagler. Mr. McFarland had, by that time, got a plant together, and, save for the purchase of sewing machines, was ready for business and had orders ahead to the amount of several thousands of dollars.

The Board of Trade, of Titusville, met for the purpose of considering the matter and it was unanimously voted that the opening of the factory here would be a good thing. Several prominent citizens spoke of the best way to organize, and it was finally decided that stock should be issued to an amount of \$2,500 at ten per cent. interest, payable annually, and that such stock, in order to get the ready money, should be sold to the village capitalists at \$80 per share of \$100 face value, for \$150. Mr. McFarland, as manager

of the company, was to give security by signing a mortgage.

the town, and check for \$100 to pay, in part, for the installation of the machines, the company would consider the matter of sending them.

Here, the "nerve" and candid audacity of this undaunted man served him well. Instead of despairing, he hustled around, got the \$100, and sent it to the company in the form of a certified check.

In a few days, with \$1,200 worth of sewing machines set up in his factory, Mr. McFarland began work.

Meanwhile, although the means were lacking to conduct the business on the plan desired or considered indispensable by Mr. McFarland, a company was formed and the utility of the tents received every test before numerous groups of orange growers that could be given in the absence of killing frost; the consequence was that orders hurried in faster than the company was ready to fill them. Mr. McFarland was associated with several others, who, like himself, were ignorant of the details of manufacturing the tents, and who knew nothing about the method of treating the cloth—a process with which Mr. McFarland was very familiar.

The breaking of a lot of "raw"

While the condition of the company was fast approaching a crisis, two well-known circus managers were speeding on their way to Titusville—both intent on laughing Mr. McFarland out of what seemed to them "a mad scheme," and both ready to offer him a princely salary to go with their company. They even bid against each other in their proposed offer; but they were like the sinners, who "came to scoff, but remained to pray." The circus men were given the glad hand by their old-time comrade, who began to unfold the immense possibilities of his scheme of protection. They were charmed, captivated and carried away with the idea. They informed Mr. McFarland that they believed he had a bonanza and would relinquish all designs upon his person, but would go away, regretting that they could not secure his valuable services.

"No," said Mr. McFarland, "I have something to prove."

He then told them of his predicament—how he was like a man "squeezed" out of the company's prospective profit. There was to be a holding of the stockholders that night